The Christian's *glorious* CORONATION-DAY.

A

SERMON

Preached at the VISITATION of the

Rev^d. JOHN TAYLOR, L.L.D.

ARCHDEACON of BUCKINGHAM.

At St. GILES's, STONY-STRATFORD,

ON

MONDAY, October 4. 1761.

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——*That no man take thy Crown.* Rev. iii. 11.

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1 Epiſtle of PETER, Chap. v. Verſe 1.

And when the Chief Shepherd *ſhall appear, ye ſhall receive a Crown of Glory, that fadeth not away.*

THE eyes, thoughts, and diſcourſe of moſt, have been very lately engaged, on the grandeurs of the coronation; a ceremony attended with each pomp and circumſtance of human glory; and that too with the univerſal, joyfulleſt acclamations of a free and grateful people. Every loyal ſubject, every well-wiſher to the peace and proſperity of this happy country, will, I doubt not, unite their affectionate prayers with mine, that the tranſactions of that day may be diſtinguiſhed with bleſſings to the lateſt poſterity.

But

But what is the moſt ſplendid, deſirable earthly diadem? What the diſtinctions paid in the loudeſt popular acclamations? What the moſt laſting, flouriſhing ſtate of worldly greatneſs, in competition with the proſpect that the text preſents!—when compared to an incorruptible, a celeſtial Crown! — and that too, heightened by this ſatisfying, animating conſideration (which the circumſtances of the *other* will in no caſe admit) that the weakeſt candidate, even the very pooreſt and meaneſt, is incouraged, is invited to hope for—may be certain to obtain.

O, that I might prevail in this earneſt deſire of my ſoul!—that I could encourage ſo enlarged an hope! that, not only each one that hears me this day, but all, in every place, may be perſuaded into a belief of this ineſtimable TRUTH—ſuch a belief as ſhould influence their opinions and conduct; that they might become poſſeſſed of this glorious, intereſting dignity. And not ſuffer *that* ſevere confuſion, which an irreſiſtible conviction will otherwiſe force upon them, when *too late*, of the moſt deſperate inconſideration, madneſs, and folly!

This

This immortal, inviting prize, *the crown of heavenly and unfading glory*, the ſcriptures ſpeak of in a variety of places, as the undoubted privilege, the common felicity of all true chriſtians, of every real diſciple and follower of the *Lamb of God*: and *ſuch* are to conceive themſelves included, in whatever way this ſubject comes under conſideration. But as the text, and occaſion of our preſent meeting, lead me to regard theſe words, more immediately, ſpoken to perſons in the ſacred, *miniſterial office*, as an encouragement to them in the many difficulties and labours of their great work; and the apoſtle's addreſs is to them, at the firſt verſe, *The Elders* (or in the word, himſelf uſes) Πρεσβυτέρους, the Preſbyters, *which are among you, I exhort*: allow me to direct my leading aim in this diſcourſe the ſame way; not excluding the like expectations (as I have ſaid) of other chriſtians. And may the Almighty gracious SPIRIT, who can only *teach us to profit*; and was given with the promiſe that He ſhould *guide into all truth*, take under his influences, both miniſters and people: and make, my dear brethren, what ſhall be delivered, ſeaſonable, acceptable, and uſeful unto all.

The

The views in which I would engage your meditations on the text, will be comprized in theſe particulars,

—The character and deſcription here, and elſewhere, uſed of the eminently-glorious perſon, dignified with this name of the *Chief Shepherd*—the diſcovery, we are taught to expect He will make of himſelf, by his appearance — the reward He will then with ſuch munificence diſpence — and who they are, that in an eſpecial manner, ſhall be the diſtinguiſhed, inconceivably happy receivers.

I. We have the deſcription and condition of the eminently-glorious perſon, characterized in this place by the title of the *Chief Shepherd*.

The name of ſhepherd is often, in ſcripture, applied to the ſupreme JEHOVAH. And is an aſcription He takes upon Himſelf in the 34th chap. of Ezekiel, the fineſt piece of paſtoral and (let me add too) of allegorical writing, exiſting in the world. The ALMIGHTY ſpeaks of the people all throughout, as HIS *flock* and HIS *ſheep*: and the laſt verſe uncloaths itſelf very beautifully of the

the metaphor in theſe words, *ye my flock of my paſture are men, and I am your* GOD, *ſaith the* LORD GOD. Thus it is uſed again in the 23d Pſalm (another ſhort, but inimitable ſpecimen of finiſhed, ſacred paſtoral) the LORD *is my ſhepherd.* And, with an exalted ſtrain (80 Pſal. 1. v.) *Give ear, O Shepherd of Iſrael, thou that leadeſt Joſeph like a flock, thou that dwelleſt between the Cherubim*: and the 3d v. will tell us to whom this ſublime addreſs is directed, *turn us, O* LORD GOD. Nor with any leſs propriety, or fullneſs of latitude, are each of the above-named paſſages applicable to the *Chief Shepherd*, our glorious REDEEMER; He is mentioned (Rom ix. v.) with theſe expreſs terms *who is over all*, GOD, *bleſſed for ever*, ratified with a ſolemn AMEN. And is delineated out, in prophecies, and a rich treaſury of promiſes in holy writ, by this ſimilitude of a *ſhepherd*; in phraſes declarative of the moſt conſummate, higheſt, abſolute Divinity. Particularly Zechariah xiii. 7. *Awake O ſword againſt my* Shepherd, *and the* Man *that is my* Fellow, *ſaith* THE LORD of HOSTS: *Smite the Shepherd, and the ſheep ſhall be ſcattered*; which latter words, it is very conſiderable, three

of

of the evangeliſts * make our LORD apply to Himſelf; with plain referrence to this place in the prophet, by his twice ſaying, *It is written.* — But where is it written, except in the above-cited prophecy? It would be well this obſervation were attended to, and reconciled to ſenſe, by thoſe who are the bold diſputers of the SON's *eſſential* DEITY. Dying Jacob, ſo many ages paſt, in thoſe earlieſt times, found *here* the ſource of all his conſolations. He had ſeen Him at Bethel in his emblematic viſion — beheld the Godhead in conjunction with the humanity, in *that ladder ſet upon the earth; the top of which reached to heaven.* — Had a revelation of him, to his bodily ſenſes, at Peniel, ‖ where (it deſerves our notice) the expreſſion uſed is, "A MAN *wreſtled with him,*" and yet the more recollected ſentiments and language, hereupon, of this prophetic patriarch (this *holy man of God, that ſpake as he was moved by the Holy Ghoſt)* are theſe, *I have ſeen* GOD *face to face.* † —And the comfort, when ex-

* Compare Math. xvi. 31. Mark xiv. 27. and John xvi. 32.

‖ Gen. xxxii. 30. † See this abſolutely confirmed, Hoſ. xii. 45.

expiring, of this ancient venerable believer, was ultimately and alone in CHRIST; under this title and mark of eminency, *the Shepherd* (as he ſtyles him) *and Stone of Iſrael*, Gen. xlix. 24. That *foundation* of GOD's placing, *which ſtandeth ſure, any other than which, can no man lay*; and will be *that* to lateſt times, on which, all that are ſaved, ſhalt be built up for glory. Prophecied of, with the very ſame mention made of Him, afterwards by ‖ Iſaiah; and St. Peter, had his eye unto (in the 2d. chap. of this epiſtle) in what he writes is contained in the ſcriptures, *Behold, I lay in Zion a Chief Corner* Stone, *elect, precious; and he that believeth in Him, ſhall not be confounded.*

It would be endleſs to collect all the places in which this appellation of a Shepherd is given to CHRIST. As the *Lamb of God*, He died to purchaſe the flock with his blood; He roſe again, and lives to take charge of, watch over, and keep the fold, as *the Shepherd and biſhop of their ſouls.* * No character more ſuitable than this, to ſhew forth his intimate relation, his unwearied pains, his conſtant vigilance, compaſſionate gentleneſs, and faithfulneſs

‖ Iſai. xxviii. 16. * 1 Pet. ii. 25.

to provide for, ſuccour, and preſerve them. In which, in a variety of ways and figurative expreſſions, He is ſhadowed out, and manifeſted to us, in the word of GOD.

—Sometimes, with this intent, we find mention of Him as the *good Shepherd*, and it deſerves remark, our LORD ſeems to delight in making Himſelf familiar to us by this name: twice in St. John (chap. x.) he uſes it; *I am the* good Shepherd, *and know my ſheep, and am known of mine.* And again, *I am the* good Shepherd—and —*I lay down my life for the ſheep.* The *good Shepherd* indeed, and to be highly loved by them, whoſe pity was ſo exceſſive, whoſe affection ſo unexampled!—The tenderneſs, ſympathy, and melting bowels of the *good Shepherd*, cannot be ſet out by a more endearing inſtance; or in more lively, moving, and feeling language, than in that of the ſublime, evangelical prophet (Iſ. xl. 11.) *He ſhall feed his flock, like a Shepherd, He ſhall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his boſom, and ſhall gently lead thoſe that are with young.*

—He is alſo by St. Paul (Heb. xiii. 20.) ſtyled the *great Shepherd.* Many, beſides, may have proper qualifications, and honoured

noured with the truſt of being *under-ſhepherds*; and, to the degree of grace received, may be *good ſhepherds*, likewiſe: but cannot participate in the ſole pre-eminence, muſt not arrogate to themſelves, nor uſurp the title of THAT Shepherd, THAT GREAT SHEPHERD. John was the *alone*, predicted harbinger of CHRIST; yet confeſſes of himſelf, he was not THE CHRIST. Our LORD vouchſafes him the acknowledgment, *he was a burning, and a ſhining light*; (John v. 35.) but the ſame Evangeliſt puts this careful diſtinction (c. i. 8.) *he was not* THAL LIGHT. The ſtars have all their uſe and different luſtres, but there is but *one Sun*, one prime and grand luminary. *There ſhall be one fold*, ſays CHRIST, *and one ſhepherd*. HE, *whom the God of peace brought again from the dead, even our Lord Jeſus*, is the one, and THAT GREAT SHEPHERD *of the ſheep*. He is by his eſſential union with the Godhead great in his perſon; and poſſeſſed, among his other titles, with this attribute of incommunicable glory, by which he is in direct terms, named (Titus ii. 13.) the *great* GOD *and our Saviour*.

And on this account, and with the ſame meaning, is that other expreſſion here made of Him by St. Peter, of the *Chief Shepherd*. He is not wanting in the readieſt diſpoſitions to take on him the accompliſhing our ſalvation, for He is the *good Shepherd*: nor unfurniſhed of any neceſſary ſufficient powers for the full execution hereof; for He is THAT *Great Shepherd*; and the ſheep are committed by the Father to his truſt—He bought, moreover, and purchaſed the dear flock to himſelf, at the coſtly price of his invaluable blood; for which reaſons, He is with diſtinguiſhed propriety, the *Chief Shepherd* alſo. And alone, and moſt deſervedly, He bears the honour. He commiſſions too, and ſtations the ſubordinate ſhepherds in their ſeveral charges—and will require their accounts, and diſpenſe their Rewards.

Which aptly yields an introduction for this next obſervation, namely,

II. This *good*, this *great*, and *Chief Shepherd*, will at laſt appear.

He is ſet forth in this familiar deſcription of a ſhepherd, to abate the dread we might

might entertain of this aweful advent: to allay our fears, inſpirit our endeavours, quicken our preparations, and engage our hopes. And we ſhould always, when conſidering this event, unite our ideas of the *good*, along with the *great* and *chief* Shepherd: this the compilers of an ancient well-known ritual, * retained in the daily ſervice of our church (it may be imagined) had in their thoughts, when upon the comforting impreſſions left freſh on our minds in thoſe ſweet words and declaration of Faith. "*When thou hadſt overcome the ſharpneſs of death, thou did'ſt open the kingdom of heaven to all believers,*" it is preſently added, "*We believe that* Thou *ſhalt come to be our judge*: And we farther improve upon this argument in thoſe reſponſes that next follow. Our Saviour for the ſame end (it may be ſuppoſed) chuſes to ſpeak of himſelf, by this eaſy, low reſemblance, "*Son of Man,*" when he is ſetting out his laſt auguſt appearance; in a Pomp of Words that are full of ſacred majeſty: and ſoftens the ſcene, by veiling it under the tranſaction of a ſhepherd (Math. xxv. 31—2) *When the* Son of Man *ſhall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with Him*

* Te Deum Laudamus.

Him; then ſhall he ſit upon the throne of his glory: and before him ſhall be gathered all Nations, and He ſhall ſeperate them one from another, as a ſhepherd *divideth his ſheep from the Goats.* And it is intended as one ſpecial inſtance of the philanthropy, and condeſcenſion of the Almighty Father, that he hath given our divine LORD authority of executing judgment, *becauſe he is the Son of Man.* (John v. 27.) And when the beloved apoſtle, in the apocalyptic viſion he had of our glorified *Redeemer*, (Rev. c. i.) was over-awed and dying with the ſight, he re-animates him (v. 18.) by bringing to his remembrance "I am he that liveth, *and was dead.*" The ſame once ſuffering, expiring *Emmanuel*, that in our nature was nailed, and died upon a croſs at Calvary, ſhall, in the ſame, our very likeneſs (irradiated with all the additional brightneſs, he from eternity poſſeſſed, of the Godhead) arraign, and finally judge our world. The diſhonours of the croſs, and his ſtate of voluntary humiliation for our worthleſs ſakes, he will for ever wipe away at that appearance.—*Every eye ſhall ſee Him, and they alſo which pierced him.*

—The

—The tremendous judge will come! it is enrolled among the ſolemn decrees of heaven, and publiſhed to mankind—— the *Chief Shepherd* will appear!—ſhould not, the mean time, the concerning queſtion be (O aſk it every mortal, put it to thy heart!) But what way muſt I meet Him? How ſhall I be found?— this would be the beſt preſervative from a diſpiriting, ſlaviſh dread: a tried, ſure ground for hope. *Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we perſuade Men.* In what frame (ſhould every one enquire) will the great Judge of quick and dead find *me?* What is my preſent condition?—*that*, of my natural, fallen eſtate! in my original defilement, diſtance, and enmity to GOD! —or am I changed *by the waſhing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghoſt?*—Am I indeed in Chriſt?—or not? To *be found in* HIM, by more than a principle of mere profeſſion, was the ultimate, turning point, in a holy apoſtle (St. Paul's) deſire.— *Being juſtified by Faith have I peace with* GOD? or am, ſtill, under the reigning, condemning power of unbelief? the dominion of ſin? and in ſlavery to the devil? — And how ſhall I get out of ſuch a ſtate? how? but by applying as a convinced, wholly undone

done ſinner, flying to, and fiducially embracing *that record God has given of his Son, that believing, I might have life thro' his name:* receive, in this way, the forgiveneſs of ſins; have the adoption, ſealing, and ſanctifying communications of his SPIRIT, the new heart promiſed, given me; ſhew forth to men my faith by my works, that is indeed of the right kind, of *the operation of God:* walk henceforth in newneſs of life, and have a reſpect to all his commandments.

And ſhould not miniſters too, againſt ſuch an occaſion, apply this enquiry? "the LORD of the vineyard hath employed me in a weighty truſt — given me my one or more talents, and hath ſaid, "Occupy till I come," How, when the *Chief Shepherd* ſhall appear, will my accounts be placed? with theirs *that have walked in craftineſs, and handled the word of God deceitfully*—or *as a workman that needeth not to be aſhamed, rightly dividing the word of truth? — making full proof of my miniſtry?* — or *ſhunning to declare the whole counſel of God*; and having found no concern to be *pure from the blood of all men?* This will lead us to conceive of him as further examining, What are thoſe principles

principles I have imbibed and taught? Did I learn them from the holy ſcriptures of truth—or the magiſtracy of ſchools and human theories? had they a tendency to advance the REDEEMER's glory *alone*, in the ſalvation of ſouls *(the miniſtry of reconciliation)* and not what *man's wiſdom teacheth*, the philoſophy and vain deceit, *and oppoſitions of ſcience, falſly ſo called; after the traditions of men, the rudiments of the world, and not after* CHRIST?—Have I look'd heedfully to it, that what I have preached has been not only *the truth*, but the truth alſo, *as it is in* JESUS; and I have not falſified the goſpel, by making it nothing more than a re-promulgating the *law of nature*, and as if it were a covenant of works, or that vain figment, a *remedial law*. And with what motives and ends in view have I preached them? *That God might be glorified in all things through Jeſus Chriſt*, and *many be added to the church daily, ſuch as ſhould be ſaved?* And what encouraging, or comfortable teſtimonies have been vouchſafed me, that (though *with many tears and temptations that befell me*) I have, yet, obtained mercy of my MASTER's hands to be faithful?

Happy he, who can paſs his own audit, and, on ſafe warrant, diſmiſs himſelf from every challenge! How neceſſary is it they, who are entruſted with the care of ſouls, ſhould acquit themſelves of capital errour, partiality, unwatchfulneſs, or negligence, leſt any given to their charge, ſhould by their means, be miſſing; and the chief Shepherd ſhould meet and arreſt them in their walk, with this demand, "Where, and in what hands?—whoſe fold and keeping (*mine* or *Satan*'s) haſt thou lodged *thoſe few poor ſheep* in the wilderneſs?"—and they ſhould find themſelves ſurpriſed into outer darkneſs—bound hand and foot—and ſpeechleſs!

How (on the other hand) bleſſed a condition will it be, if they *ſhould hear the voice of the* LORD GOD calling, as to Adam, "*Where art thou?*" to have it, comfortably, to reply, "Behold me here, LORD! watching in the *ſtand* thou did'ſt put me; doing *thy* work: preaching *thy* word; warning, inviting, and gathering in *ſinners*; and training up *ſaints* in their meetneſs for heaven.

Which affords a proper place for conſidering.

III. The reward, itſelf, which will be then diſpenced.

The diſtribution will be at this ſeaſon ; for the text declares it to be, *when the Chief Shepherd ſhall appear*. And, if ſo raviſhing is the foreſight, what will be the poſſeſſed, the participated bleſſing ! it will be *a crown of glory that fadeth not away*.

Let us take a few tranſient views, as it were by parts, of the ſeveral jewels that compoſe this crown, and we ſhall find, at every time, new wonders.

And what a grandeur of expreſſion and climax, is here in this ſmall collection of ſyllables uſed in deſcribing it !—it is ſet out, in general, by this ſingle, little, but how copious word ?

—A *crown*. Ordinary common ſentiment takes in much from that *bare* form of ſpeech, and ſupplies a redundancy of meaning. A crown is an expreſſion of ſtrongeſt energy, and ſuggeſts a thouſand ideas of magnificence and pleaſure. It is the topmoſt pinacle of human hope, and hardieſt ambition. See how the ſcripture condeſcends to treat us by ſpeaking in ſounds of familiar, and readieſt conception. — It carries in it the notions of dignity and ſuper-eminency, of amplitude and fulneſs. The heavenly beatitude ſhall encircle, deco-

rate

rate, and take *in* the whole compounded eſſence, body and ſoul; every conſtituent part and faculty. It alſo conveys to our thought the ideas of influence and authority; and the capacity for unbounded delights; which ſhall, then, be profuſely diſpenſed *at* GOD's *right-hand.* This is the reward—A *crown*—But this is not all: for the gradation enlarges, heightens, every ſtep we advance—it is, above all this,

—A *crown of glory.* Every crown is glorious, but this excels in glory. Our dying, loving REDEEMER, to obtain it, was content to wear for us *a crown of vileſt thorns,* that he might ſet *a crown of pure* celeſtial *gold* on our baſe, earth-born Heads — was *crucified* that we might *reign.*—It implies — a day, without a night; a ſun, without a cloud; a bliſs, without an end! all that is ennobling, enlivening or perfecting! that can confer excellency, or attract admiration!

—Compare it *with the preſent condition of the body*—ſorrows, ſickneſs, pain, want, age, and death; its contraſts are, *the glory of this matchleſs crown.* They ſhall be exchanged for joys, health, eaſe, and riches; changeleſs youth, and endleſs life: the ab-

abſence of all evils, and fruition of all good. Or in the apoſtle Paul's incomparable antitheſes, *this* corruptible *ſhall put on* incorruption; and *this* mortal *ſhall put on* immortality.

—Compare it *with the preſent condition of the ſoul.* From knowing in part, we ſhall know, even *as we are known.* Affections ſhall have rectified propenſions and objects—our perverted wills move right, with an adjuſted ballance — and ſin, the inrooted leproſy of our fallen natures, loſe its name and being, in *conſummated holineſs.* It muſt needs be glorious, for it is a primæval, ancient royalty, *a kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world.* The diadems *muſt* be ſplendid, that ſuch illuſtrious ſovereigns wear; for *they ſhall ſhine forth,* themſelves, *as the ſun in the kingdom of their Father.* (Mat. xiii. 43.) It muſt needs be a crown of inſuperable glory; for *in God's light they ſhall ſee light.*

And wants there more to ſet it off?—yes!—(bleſſed be the purchaſer and beſtower of this ineſtimably, precious gift!) —the faireſt jewel is yet behind—

—It *fadeth not away.* A fading crown, a cheap, mean wreath, of a few ſhort-liv'd

liv'd herbs or flowers, given anciently to ſuch as came off victors, at the famous Grecian athletic games, was all they got, for agonizing wreſtlings, racings, ſweat, and toils. They ran (ſaith St. Paul, 1 Cor. ix. 25.) *to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible.* (The ſame alluſion to theſe public ſports, that gave occaſion to this way of ſpeaking in the text) What emulations, preparatory diſcipline and regimen, ſtrivings and vehemence of conflict, did theſe excite! and yet how poor, after all, was the prize!—They beſtowed their honours a few hours, or days, on the wearers, and then they vaniſhed, withered, and *returned to their earth*—and all *their gains periſhed.* — But a nobler, ſpiritual, immaterial crown! — A *crown of glory!* — *A crown of glory that fadeth not away!*—*eternal, in the heavens!* — Every mention adds a luſtre; every word a charm! — Permanency is the chiefeſt good in bliſs. Our higheſt joys have, *this*, of pain, becauſe they laſt not. TO HAVE BEEN *bleſt*! is the deepeſt accent *in*, gives the keeneſt edge *to* mortal grief. In heaven there are no depoſing Æras; no ſurrendering back of crowns, by changes, times, nor death—*they go no more out, but are as pillars*, (the ſtability and

and embelliſhing ornaments of the fabrick) *in the temple of God*, for ever and ever. (Rev. iii. 12.) The happineſs of the upper, inviſible world of ſpirits, is better known by compariſons of the negative, than poſitive ſort; by circumſtances gathered from the infelicities, we feel annoy our preſent ſtate of animal being: by contemplating, rather, what heaven *is not*, than what *it is*.

—It *fadeth not away*. To ſpeak more of this tranſcendent crown, would be depreciating, diminiſhing it's ſuperlative luſtre; ſince all language fails, and our images are too faint and dull, and all the richeſt flowers of man's rhetoric are too poor, to inveſtigate theſe myſteries— and we are ſtopt by a meſſage from heaven (1 Cor. ii. 9.) which informs us, *eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard*, neither have entered *into the heart of man* (that capacious, aſpiring, ever-inquiſitive thing) *what God hath prepared for them that love Him.*

Let us therefore, my brethren, advert to what, if rightly improved, will be of infinitely more ſervice to us, by enquiring under the laſt head, which remains to be conſidered,

IV. Who they are that, with reſpect to this glory, will be the diſtinguiſhed, inconceivably happy receivers.

And the anſwer is, in general, as before was intimated, every real chriſtian, as many (whatever) as are faithful, humble, converted perſons, or (in the chief Shepherds own determinate language, (Math. xix. 28.) *they which have followed him in the regeneration.* Theſe are the true ſayings of GOD. Yet as the text and verſes preceeding, direct themſelves (as was obſerved) in a more limitted way to thoſe, who as candidates and expectants of this crown of glory, are the faithful miniſters of the church of *Chriſt*, let us ſee in which way the careful apoſtle orders his exhortation, and how he deſcribes them.

And in concurrence with this—*they feed the flock of God.* This is GOD's own requirement. (Ezek. xxxiv. 2.) *ſhould not the Shepherds feed the flocks?* This comprehends in it the ſuppoſition of circumſpection, ſkilfulneſs, and diligence. Some are CHRIST's real ſheep, known tho' not to us, yet unto Him; that are not at preſent brought into his fold. Theſe are to be ſought out, awakened, invited: their miſery, and way of recovery by *Chriſt*, faithfully, unreſervedly, and plainly ſet before them. Compaſſion is to be had of ſome, making a difference; others to be ſaved *with fear, pulling them out of the fire.*

fire. And as theſe are to be brought in, ſo others are to be built up and edified: theſe require diverſity of foods, and change of management. Some are yet as babes in knowledge; theſe deſire, and are to be nouriſhed with, *the ſincere milk of the word* (cleareſt, gentleſt, grateful doctrines, of ſweet and cordial promiſes) like that infant diet, and eaſieſt of concoction. Some, riper grown, require *meat*, food more nutritive and ſolid, that they may be ſtrengthened and raiſed to maturity; *and belongs* to them that are of full age, (Heb. v. 14) *milk*, uſed to theſe (as in the verſe before) would *be unskilful.* Others are again, changing, wavering, and unſtable; and muſt be argued with, confirmed, eſtabliſhed. There are not a few that backſlide and go aſtray; ſuch muſt be alarmed from their lethargy, called *to remember from whence they are fallen and repent and do their firſt works*; yet compaſſionately bound up, if they are broken and diſeaſed; and are never to be terrified, or driven to deſpair. Some are weary and heavy laden, labouring under fears, guilt, deſertions, and temptations: bowed down like *the bruiſed reed* — or, (diſheartened in the beginning of convictions, and the weak, ſcarce-perceptable, ſigns of converſion and grace) are like the *ſmoaking flax*, that hardly betrays the inwardly-concealed, enkindled

flame; theſe ſhould have their doubts reſolved, be encouraged, comforted. While ſome there are, whoſe hearts are lifted up in the conſolations of GOD, and ought not to be checked nor diſcountenanced: but admoniſhed to be thankful and peculiarly watchful; meekly cautioned againſt ſpiritual pride and all *highmindedneſs*; and bid to *rejoice with* godly *trembling*.

Theſe are a few ſketches of the different ſtates of the flock, that call for the paſtor's feeding: and ſhew the neceſſity and care, the obſervation and ſkill, ſo requiſite herein. And as they are to diſtribute proportionable, ſo muſt it be (too) wholſom food, the goſpel-manna, bread of life, CHRIST, and Him crucified; *nouriſhed up in the words of faith and good doctrine*. (1 Tim. iv. 6.) Briefly, the whole of miniſterial-diſpenſation, on the evangelical-plan, may be ſummed up in this; The ruin of mankind, brought on the whole race, by ſin; their recovery as effected by CHRIST, applied by his Spirit; and the gratitude reſulting from theſe experienced bleſſings; diſcharged in obedience, and univerſal good works. Or, in ſhorter compaſs ſtill, In making loſt ſinners ſenſible of their ſtate, and wants; ſhewing them their help; and exerting every art and endeavour in getting them to accept it.

There is further required in this exhortation,

Affectionate willingneſs, and readineſs; — *not by conſtraint but willingly*. Without

out this nothing will be well; nor heartily attempted. Love to CHRIST and ſouls is as the ſpring, that acts and regularly moves the Miniſter. Our Lord well knew this, when he required thrice of Peter a confeſſion of his love, before he re-inſtated him in his commiſſion "*feed my ſheep.*" The important worth of an immortal ſoul is a caſe, if any, that ſhould moſt ſenſibly affect us. I have felt myſelf impreſt by meditations ſomewhat like theſe "there ſits *one* whom I have reaſon to fear, is in the very gall of bitterneſs, and bond of iniquity; gladly would I reſcue him as a brand from the burning. May the power of GOD be preſent to heal him!—a *ſecond*, is in a ſtupidly ſenſeleſs, a profoundly ſecure ſtate, polluted and caſt out in his blood, *as in the day he was born*, and ſees not, nor has the leaſt deſire to ſee, *the fountain ſet open for ſin*, and *for uncleanneſs*. By what methods ſhall I diſcover, win over, and allure him thither? how, prevail on him, to make the venture, *to waſh him in the blood that cleanſeth from all ſin?*—yonder, greatly-pitied, ſoul is *earthy, ſenſual deviliſh*; *ſerving diverſe luſts and pleaſures*; never happy but in ſome criminal gratification, never miſerable but in the want of ſuch opportunities. *The preacher* (it is ſaid Eccleſ. xii. 10) *ſought to find out acceptable Words*; might I obtain them of the ſame SPIRIT! to draw him into love of the original,

nal, uncreated, infinite Beauty; ſhew him heavenly crowns and endleſs pleaſures, more exquiſite far than earth can yield, and charm him *to forſake the fooliſh and live.*" When we are overlooking, with an eye humane and tender, the ſeveral individuals and parts of our flocks, and handing out to a number of fellow, inſenſible, and neceſſitous wretches, the bread and food of immortal life, ah! can we be unconcerned and refuſe to tremble, leſt it ſhould prove to ſome *the ſavour of death unto* DEATH. And is there nothing? methinks! while I ſpeak, it ſhould be felt at every heart, nothing?—in a loſt ſoul!—a loſt GOD!—a loſt Saviour!—and a loſt heaven!

It is with ſuch diſpoſitions and qualifications only, we can, in this apoſtles definition be good and, as ſuch, faithful miniſters of *Jeſus Chriſt.*

The diſqualifications which would indiſpoſe, and render them unfaithful, he places (that I can but glance at) in the oppoſite ſcale.

The firſt of theſe is covetouſneſs—*not for filthy lucre.* Is He likely to be the man that ſhall lead others hearts to heaven, while his own *cleaveth to he duſt*, and is wholly intent *on the gold that periſheth?* Will he be ſuitably concerned to win men over to the worſhip and ſervice of the only living and true GOD, that *ſets up the ſtumbling block of his iniquity before his face*, and bows down (for his part) to a golden image? *Coveteouſneſs* (ſaith St. Paul)

Paul) *which is idolatry.* This made Judas a *Son of Perdition*—ſeduced him to prefer, even thirty pieces of ſilver to the *Son of God*, and a *crown of Glory*. Will he not be tempted to have his eye on the fleece, more than to overſee and feed the flock? And can he hope to receive a royal beneficence from the hands of the *chief Shepherd*, who hath ſhamefully declared himſelf the ſervant *of the unrighteous mammon?* or be proper to inculcate an heavenly and ſpiritual religion, whoſe name and hopes *are written in the earth?*

PRIDE, is another diſqualification inſtanced; *neither as being lords over God's heritage.* This *was not made for man*, ſo impoveriſhed and made up of neceſſities. Is this the inſtructor that is to teach us to renounce, in our baptiſm, *the vain pomp and glory of this world*, and inculcate our Saviours humble doctrine *to be converted and become like little children?* Can this be he, the tender ſhepherd, to whom the poor doubting, wounded ſoul can apply for condeſcending, gentle relief, and open all his diſtreſſes freely? We can reaſonably expect nothing from a proud miniſter, but that he will directly counter-act this holy apoſtles order, love *pre-eminence*, and *lord it over God's heritage.*

The laſt, and by many degrees worſt diſqualification of all, is a wicked life. And how can this be otherwiſe, when the exhortation calls to a care of *being enſamples*

to

to the flock. *This* cuts the vital heart-ſtrings of all paſtoral affection, influence, nay, and very action. Will not the hypocriſy lie too ſhallow, that would perſuade men he has any leaſt concern for the ſecurity of their ſouls, that is ſo ſcandalouſly deficient in a care for his own? What heights of orthodoxy, or endowments ſoever he may have the reputation of, it will all ſtand aſſuredly, for nothing—nay, he endangers by this, and furniſhes the temptation of bringing even ſaving truths themſelves into ſuſpicion, or, at beſt, into neglect. He degrades the office of an holy function to the meaneſt baſeneſs. Every duty he exerciſes of his place, muſt put a force on all his inclinations, excite averſions the moſt diſagreeable, call up reflections he would leaſt recollect, and compel him to an unwilling view of truths, that unavoidably will give him many a ſecret pang. He muſt either be ſunk into the moſt lifeleſs formality or ſeared by an obdurate, atheiſtical unbelief, if he can poſſeſs any quiet in ſuch a ſtation. He is in a ſituation the moſt likely of any to loſe his own ſoul, and let him put on appearances ever ſo contrary, to draw multitudes into the ſame ruin: for let bad men SAY, even *ever ſo well*, yet others will *do as they* DO. And experience has long confirm'd the truth and wiſdom in this obſervation, *that miniſters can never preach* up, *what themſelves live* down.

Should

Should not, then, my reverend and honoured brethren, theſe ſolemn admonitions of ſcripture here laid before us, bring the exhortation of another apoſtle home to our hearts? "*But thou, O man of God, flee all theſe things.*" The good St. Peter puts the *crown of glory* in the laſt of the four verſes, that the text ſtands connected with. Perhaps, to teach us always what our work is, and how it ſhould be qualified, before we are to look what will be our ſurpaſſingly great reward. Let us endeavour to keep both together more cloſely and conſtantly in our view—Then may we lift up our heads and rejoyce when we ſee our *chief Shepherd* appearing in the clouds, and are called to meet him; and ſo *a more abundant entrance will be given us into the kingdom and joy of our Lord.*

There, may the miniſters of Chriſt (here and in every place) find a readieſt, joyful, welcomed admiſſion, and ſtand with Daniel, * and the holy men of GOD, *in their lot at the end of the days.*

There, may I (tho' the meaneſt and unworthieſt) by the free, undeſerved grace of the *chief Shepherd*, be alſo admitted; and with the loweſt admiring thankfulneſs, take my humble, happy place, at the feet of all my brethren.

There, may alſo you, my brethren of the laity, even as many as *have obtained like precious faith with us, thro' the righteouſneſs of God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt*, rejoicing

* Dan. xii. 13.

meet us; together with the reſpective flocks of our charge. Tho' the text is directed for the encouragement of faithful miniſters, you have heard *the unfading crown of glory* is for you likewiſe. St. Paul, while comforting himſelf at the foreſight of his near diſſolution—"Henceforth there is laid up for *me a crown of righteouſneſs*"—forgets not to add—"and *not for for me* only, *but* for all them alſo *that love* Chriſt's *appearing*." 2 Tim. iv. 8. My parting, friendly valediction, which I leave with you all, is this, *Watch ye, ſtand faſt in the faith, quit ye like men, be ſtrong — hold faſt the form of ſound words, in faith and love, which is in Chriſt Jeſus.—Let no man*, nor boſom, moſt inſinuating temptation, *take your crown.*

Can I leave you better than at the throne of grace, mingling our mutual fervent petitions, out of thoſe collects * provided for us, by the maternal charity, prudence, and piety of our church.

"O almighty GOD, who haſt knit together thine elect in one communion and fellowſhip, in the myſtical body of thy Son Chriſt our Lord; make, we beſeech Thee, all biſhops and paſtors, diligently to preach thy holy word, and the people obediently to follow the ſame, that they may *receive the crown of everlaſting glory*, thro' Jeſus Chriſt our Lord."

* Collects for All Saints, and St. Peter's day.

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